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"Perhaps I'll be accused of being anti-American, but that's not at all true." Enrico Pieranunzi

JAZZ FESTIVAL

NOTES

Flashback, indeed

Romano's trio sounds too familiar

Monday

There was something terribly familiar about the **African Flashback** trio led by drummer **Aldo Romano** at the Spectrum. Despite the high quality of clarinetist **Louis Sclavis's** pyrotechnics – more slick than the edginess he can attain – and the ultra-solid bass of **Henri Texier**, there was a sense that the drums-of-the-desert and take-me-to-the-casbah atmosphere is playing itself out. After all, this is little more than hoity-toity "improv" on the Hollywood soundtrack that's been around since the Hope-Crosby "Road" movies. While Sclavis's chops avoided a repeat of Yusef Lateef's similarly themed somnambulant show, the academic in him made me pine for the long-gone Eric Dolphy.

JUAN RODRIGUEZ

"How's Diana?" The shout rang out from the audience before **Elvis Costello** ripped into Broken Promised Land at Salle Wilfrid Pelletier of Place des Arts. The singer gave reassurances that his wife, Diana Krall, was in fine health. "We love her!" the man continued. "Me, too. Thank you very much," Costello replied. Costello and **Allen Toussaint,** augmented by **the Imposters,** guitarist **Anthony Brown** and four horns, rocked the hall with a high-volume marathon of New Orleans-flavoured rock 'n' roll. It was a fine performance, featuring blistering Toussaint rearrangements of old Elvis faves like Tears Before Bedtime and (I Don't Want to Go to) Chelsea as well as material from their excellent disc The River in Reverse. One highlight: Crescent City legend Toussaint singing a rollicking version of A Certain Girl, which he wrote under the name Naomi Neville. The song was a hit for Ernie K-Doe in 1961.

BERNARD PERUSSE

That rarest of creatures – an opening act you want to see again – wowed Costello's audience. **Jackie Greene** did a better job than most up-and-comers of owning the large hall, but the California singer-songwriter's quartet played the kind of assured roots-rock – with elements of Bob Dylan, the Band, Bruce Springsteen and John Fogerty – that demands to be heard in a more intimate venue, preferably one that serves beer. Keep a close eye on him.

BERNARD PERUSSE

Of all the labels thrown **Nils Petter Molvaer's** way – chill artist, trip-hop, acid-jazz-industrial, Nordic brew – the one folks miss is: art music for this millennium. Listening to the Oslo trumpeter's quintet at Club Soda 'round midnight was like tumbling into a bottomless well of otherworldly sounds. This was superb electronic chamber music – five highly attuned musicians, including guitar wizard **Eivind Aarset** and programmer **Jan Bang** – offering huge soundscape vistas with a visceral sense of concentration (and cajones). At a time when "chill" has become a five-letter word for "cliché," the decade-tested Molvaer band keeps expanding sonic horizons.

JUAN RODRIGUEZ

Jazz fest facts

The Montreal International Jazz Festival runs through Sunday. Tickets for indoor concerts are on sale at the Spectrum box office, Place des Arts box office or through the Ticketpro and Admission networks. Depending on the venue, tickets may also be available at individual box offices. Outdoor shows take place in the area bordered by Ste. Catherine St., President Kennedy Ave., Bleury St. and St. Laurent Blvd. For more information, call 514-871-1881 or go to www.montrealjazzfest.com.

ITALIAN PIANIST Enrico Pieranunzi, or il professore, tinkers with emotion as he plays his dreamy yet determined blend of jazz, folk and classical

Songs and stories

JUAN RODRIGUEZ SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE

MONTREAL INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL

Pieranunzi has collaborated with sensual singer Ada Montellanico.

ROME – Meeting Enrico Pieranunzi, the dean of Italian jazz piano, as he gives me a busman's tour of his beloved Roma, it's clear why he is often called il professore. It's not just the serious demeanour (the furled brow, the glimmering glare), or that he taught for years at the conservatory near his birth place in Rome. Forget the fact that he put in many hours as Ennio Morricone's favoured soundtrack pianist, that he encompasses modern Italian jazz history from the anarchic 1970s through playing with Chet Baker to his search for poetry at his "island of 88 keys." Or that he occasionally dons the role of jazz critic, his study of Bill Evans (The Pianist as an Artist) being one of the little gems of jazz literature.

Pieranunzi's near aristocratic dreaminess – the patented satin touch – is tempered by a steely sense of determination. Above all, his music has a romantic you-must-believe-in-spring air.

Now 56, in recent years Pieranunzi has claimed the mantle of a great jazz improviser (witness his trio's recent acclaimed double album Live in Paris), but it's his classical side that he brings to Montreal. His two different solo piano recitals tonight, Perugia Suite and Canto Nascosto, are based on recordings for the small Egea label that releases his recital-inclined material (and put together the jazz festival's Suono Italia series).

"Canto Nascosto means 'hidden song,' reflecting something deep within myself," Pieranunzi says. "It's a simple, almost crab-like melody, very connected to the sounds and atmospheres I heard as a child. Egea allowed me to discover an area of my composition that would have been hidden." Listening to Pieranunzi is hearing a man tinkering with emotion, reflecting, refining, all toward appreciating emotions as part of experiencing them.

"Egea is like my little corner of the sky, where I feel completely free to look for beauty. It found an audience for this storytelling music that nobody thought was there. It existed at the borders – people who aren't necessarily jazz fans, or jazz fans who aren't fond of post-bop styles, as well as those who feel a deep resonance with folk roots, and classical music. It's kind of mild, like speech that talks sweetly to you, but also rigorous."

That tenor perfectly fits Pieranunzi, who says playing with '50s cool icon Chet Baker – considered washed up in America in the '80s but idolized in Italy – taught him about melody.

"I had been under the sway of bebop, Charlie Parker then Bud Powell, but things changed radically when I met Chet. He was a master of giving melody its highest value. A song in his lips became a story. Playing with him was a shock for me: He opened me up to a new perspective, mostly in the sensuality of his music."

Pieranunzi grew up with music at its source: His father was a folk music composer. "Italy has so many strong cultures, such as Naples or Sardinia, that Rome's folk culture is somewhat overlooked because it's such a cosmopolitan capital. My father was also a guitar player, and that's how I started playing jazz when I was 5. There were only jazz records in our house: Charlie Parker, Gerry Mulligan, Chet Baker, Lee Konitz, Django Reinhardt. My father was unbelievably fond of Django, so I grew up with this gypsy sound around. He bought me a piano and was my first teacher, and – this is an interesting cultural process – he taught me the (American) blues that he learned from (Gypsy Belge) Django. I started improvising with my father, but he also encouraged me to take classical lessons. I kept on this double track until my mid-20s, when jazz virtually consumed me. Yet even when I played with visiting bop musicians like Johnny Griffin, Art Farmer, Kenny Clarke, I gave classical recitals once in a while. There's never really been a separation between the two expressions in my life."

> *"A song in (Chet Baker's) lips became a story."*
> ENRICO PIERANUNZI

Il professore has since expanded on the idea of song and storytelling in his collaboration with passionately sensual singer Ada Montellanico, bringing the tragic, lovelorn songs of the late Luigi Tenco to life in Danza Di Una Ninfa.

"Music is inspired by life, and in Europe the taste of life is different. If American ears can make an effort to gravitate towards that, the music becomes clearer."

That's a big if, in the midst of American culture's post-9/11 war drumbeat. "The problem we see in Europe is that not everything is black and white," says Pieranunzi.

He pauses, sighs. "Perhaps I'll be accused of being anti-American, but that's not at all true. I became a jazz player almost solely because of the cultural penetration here by American musicians and records. Yet the deep spirit of this music sometimes seems lost on Americans themselves. The amazing possibility that you can play the blues in Tokyo, or with an Arab together with an Italian and a Russian. Some American intellectuals are lazy in understanding the universality in this music. Even if I play 'Italian' or 'European,' and Joe Lovano plays very 'American,' there's a point at which jazz is art and the differences between cultural backgrounds fade from view.

> *"There were only jazz records in our house."*
> ENRICO PIERANUNZI

"It's ironic that the more corporate globalization there is, the more there seems to be a need for human groups to stress their own identities. Globalization does not mean only one culture dominating the planet. Many people believe it means having a better way of life without cancelling their own identity. It's a difficult issue that requires dialogue.

"Having an interest for other peoples is not always easy, but I think it's the only way out. Otherwise, the perspectives are really dark for humanity, even darker for artists. In this state of perpetual war, the meaning of what it is to be an artist can be lost, and it becomes very difficult for a painting or piece of music to find its place anymore. All this can become depressing, but as artists we must react. Jazz is one of the best ways to do this, because it is so connected to basic human features: creativity, freedom, the body, sensitivity, no matter the colour of one's skin, or one's language."

Enrico Pieranunzi performs solo concerts today at Chapelle Historique du Bon Pasteur, 100 Sherbrooke St. E., at 5 and 10 p.m. Both shows are sold out. He presents Danza Di Una Ninfa on Saturday, with singer Ada Montellanico and reedman Paul McCandless, at the Cinquième Salle of Place des Arts at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are $32.50 at the box office, 514-842-2112, or Admission, 514-790-1245.

rodriguez.music@gmail.com

BARBER Montrealers 'listening very carefully'

CONTINUED FROM D1

She credits the Chicago scene for sustaining her as she developed her art, in particular through her regular gigs at clubs.

Chicago, after all, is where Louis Armstrong made his highly regarded small-group recordings in the mid-1920s. It is where the urban blues took root, and Philip Roth and the late Saul Bellow have been among its citizens.

Barber likes it that way.

"It's a very rich city culturally, with a huge theatre community – which brings in a lot of people who are good with words – the Chicago Symphony, and two great universities, which keep the city sophisticated and smart.

"We also have all this urban, cultural diversity, which gives it a kind of snap, crackle and pop."

Barber is all about intimacy, and she travels with her own sound technician, who makes sure the voice and the words come across as clearly as the band.

But getting across to a Montreal audience – even in the night-club-like atmosphere of the Spectrum – has never been a problem, she confided.

"The people in Montreal are wonderful in that they are listening very carefully.

"I can't think of a thing I wouldn't try there."

The same is true of her relationship with Blue Note Records, which is now recording and distributing her work.

"From the beginning, they understood that I had artistic control. It's in the contract."

Though Barber is taking it easy this summer, she is booked to tour extensively in the fall, from South Korea to France, Spain and Italy, and through much of the U.S.

The focus will be the Mythologies music, including a piece called Icarus that is clearly inspired by Joni Mitchell, for whom Barber has the highest regard.

"She's been a big influence on my writing."

Other artists from whom Barber has borrowed ideas range from industrial rockers Nine Inch Nails to pop star George Michael.

As for the lyrics, inspirations range from Dante to Alfred Tennyson.

Patricia Barber performs tonight at 10 at the Spectrum, 318 Ste. Catherine St. W. The show is sold out.

iblock@thegazette.canwest.com

JAZZ FEST

Barber: all about intimacy.

BEST BETS

7:30 p.m. Amparanoïa (Bell stage) – Singer Amparo Mercedes Sanchez knows Manu Chao well, and all of Europe is getting to know this band's Spanish mestizo. (Also tomorrow at 9 and 11 p.m. on the General Motors stage.)

9 and 11 p.m. Ska Cubano (General Motors stage) – Can't imagine how a Montreal crowd will avoid plunging head- or hips-first into Jamaican/Cuban rhythms.

TODAY'S SHOWS

TICKETED SHOWS

5 and 10 p.m. Enrico Pieranunzi, Chapelle Historique du Bon Pasteur, 100 Sherbrooke St. E. Sold out.
6 p.m. Salif Keita, Spectrum, 318 Ste. Catherine St. W. Sold out.
6 p.m. Joel Miller Mandala with Choir Effusion, Salles du Gesù, 1200 Bleury St., $16.50.
6 p.m. Gonzalo Rubalcaba, with David Sanchez, Théâtre Maisonneuve, Place des Arts, $39.50 to $54.50.
7 p.m. Gabriele Mirabassi and Guinga, Cabaret du Musée Juste pour rire, 2111 St. Laurent Blvd., $22.50.
7 p.m. Katie Moka and Denzal Sinclaire, Club Soda, 1225 St. Laurent Blvd. Sold out.
7 p.m. Le Bateau est en fête with Dorothée Berryman, Bateau Cavalier Maxim, departing from King Edward Pier in the Old Port, $90.55 to $119.48.
7:30 p.m. Aldo Romano with Mark Turner, Cinquième Salle, Place des Arts, $34.50.
8 p.m. Paul Simon, with the Jerry Douglas Band, Salle Wilfrid Pelletier, Place des Arts. Sold out.
8:30 p.m. Amadou et Mariam, Metropolis, 59 Ste. Catherine St. E., $39.50.
9 p.m. IKS, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, Salle Beverly Webster Rolph, 185 Ste. Catherine St. W. Sold out.
9:30 p.m. L'Amico del Vento, featuring Stefano Cantini and Rita Marcotulli, Cabaret du Musée Juste pour rire, 2111 St. Laurent Blvd., $22.50.
10 p.m. Patricia Barber, Spectrum, 318 Ste. Catherine St. W. Sold out.
10:30 p.m. Joëlle Léandre with Matthew Shipp, Salles du Gesù, 1200 Bleury St., $29.50.
Midnight. Cirkus, featuring Neneh Cherry, Club Soda, 1225 St. Laurent Blvd., $21.50.

FREE SHOWS

11 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. La Petite École du Jazz, Grande Place, Complexe Desjardins.
Noon. Aces of Dixieland, Terrasse Amarula.
1 p.m. Gadji-Gadjo, Terrasse Amarula.
3 p.m. Stage Band of École Secondaire Beaulieu, General Motors Stage.
4 p.m. Gadji-Gadjo, Alcan Stage.
5 p.m. Jtadl, CBC Television-Best Buy stage.
5:30 p.m. Loto-Québec parade with Zuruba, starts from Alcan stage.
6 p.m. Richard Whiteman Trio, General Motors stage.
6:30 p.m. Levon Ichkhanian, Carrefour General Motors.
7 p.m. Willow, Savoy Room of Metropolis, 59 Ste. Catherine St. E., free with pass.
7 p.m. Streetnix, Terrasse Amarula.
7 p.m. David Rotundo, Loto-Québec stage.
7 and 10 p.m. Pascal Tremblay Jazz Faction, Club Jazz TD Canada Trust.
7:30 p.m. Amparanoïa, Bell stage.
8 and 10 p.m. New Cool Collective, Samsung stage.
8 and 10 p.m. Matthew Von Doran, CBC Television-Best Buy stage.
8 and 10 p.m. Tena Palmer, Alcan stage.
9 and 11 p.m. Ska Cubano, General Motors stage.
9 and 11 p.m. Garrett Mason, Loto-Québec stage.
9 p.m. Niyaz, Carrefour General Motors.
10 p.m. Balkan Beat Box, Bell stage.
11 p.m. John Roney Trio, Hyatt Regency, Salon Jeanne Mance, free with festival card.
Midnight. Phantom Power Combo Deluxe, Savoy Room of Metropolis, 59 Ste. Catherine St. E.

DISC OF THE DAY

Amparanoïa

La Vida Te Da
Wrasse Records

Amparanoïa's Amparo Mercedes Sanchez is an exuberant and sometimes irreverent Spanish chanteuse with a deep, sunny voice, whose "mestizo" style is not paranoia but an open door to a culture-bender of an album mixing influences, styles and philosophies. A collaboration with old musical friends, this fifth album was recorded in one take in a studio in Spanish Basque Country and it feels like a global party. Alternating songs in English, Spanish and French, charismatic Sanchez borrows from everyone: her own country's bolero, flamenco and gypsy traditions, a bit of Mexican cumbia, a little jazz, ska, hip-hop, punk and rock 'n' roll. There's even a Spanish take on Bob Marley's Redemption Song. She's at her best in pace-switching tunes, including Tiempo Pa Mi, a slow love-hurts ballad that becomes a speed-fuelled, drum-thrashing rumba. Outstanding album, but probably even better live. **(See Best Bets above for details.)**

CHARLIE FIDELMAN

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